

Fish and Wildlife Habitat Self Assessment Tool
Montezuma Creek Watershed, Utah

These questions will help determine if the lands you wish to enroll in the Conservation Security Program (CSP) meet the wildlife requirements of a Resource Management System (RMS), which is part of the eligibility requirements for Tier III.

Directions: Read and answer each question by checking Yes, No or NA. When answering self assessment questions, answer for areas under your control. A “No” answer in Parts 2 or 3 does not automatically exclude you from Tier III eligibility. Please see the Glossary on the last page to become familiar with the terms used below.

Questions	Yes	No	Not Applicable
1. Do you have a stream (intermittent and/or perennial) in the area you wish to enroll in CSP? (If No, skip to question # 2 on next page).			
a) Channel Condition: Although stream channels may have been altered in the past, have you discontinued straightening, dredging or other channel disturbances?			
b) Riparian Vegetation: Does riparian vegetation extend away from the streambank at least one-half of the width of the channel, or if less than one-half width cover the entire floodplain?			
c) Bank Stability: Are stream banks stable (not-eroding) on more than 33% of the stream reach, and at an elevation close to that of the natural floodplain OR are practices in place to heal past erosion and bank stability is increasing?			
d) Human-made Barriers to Fish Movement: On the land you wish to enroll are drop structures, dams, culverts, or diversions UNDER YOUR CONTROL less than 1 foot high?			
e) Water Appearance: Does the water in your stream only occasionally appear cloudy, such as after a storm event, but clears rapidly; and are objects visible at 1.5' depth? If water coming on to your property is cloudy and it is either cleaner or no cloudier when it leaves your property, answer Yes (cleaner) or NA.			

2.) Do you have rangeland in the area you wish to enroll in CSP? (If “No”, skip to question 3.)			
a) Is your sagebrush canopy cover between 10 -35% on average?			
b) Do you have at least 10% canopy cover of perennial grasses?			
c) Are there at least 2 species of grasses, including 1 native grass?			
d) Do you have at least 5% forb canopy cover?			
e) Do you have at least 6 species of forbs, including at least one composite or legume?			
f) Is the average grass leaf height in the spring at least 6 inches (answer NA if blue grama is dominant)?			
g) Are invasive plant species managed (includes exotic, noxious, and native invasive plants)?			
3.) Do you have cropland, hayland, or pastureland you wish to enroll in CSP?			
a) Is there at least 5% non-cropland vegetative cover undisturbed by grazing, mowing, haying, or spraying between April 15 and June 15 each year on the land you wish to enroll?			
b) Is the non-cropland vegetative cover at least 2 acres in size?			
c) Is the average distance between non-cropland vegetative cover and more intensively managed areas less than ¼ mile?			
d) Does the non-cropland vegetative cover have at least two types of perennial plants suited to the area, such as shrubs and grasses, or tall grasses and short grasses?			
e) Do you leave at least 20% standing stubble on at least 50% of cropped field(s) after fall tillage (if any) considering crop rotation and averaging over all cropland?			

LANDOWNER SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

NAME OR IDENTIFIER FOR PARCEL OR LAND UNIT _____

(Please attach this worksheet to your Self-Assessment Workbook)

Glossary:

Channel condition – Natural stream channels typically exhibit a meandering channel pattern. Changes to stream flows affect the way a stream naturally does its work. Straightening and downcutting are serious impairments to stream function. Signs of channelization or straightening of the stream may include an unnatural straight section of the stream, high banks, dikes and berms. Vegetation may be missing or sparse. Recovery of stream functions includes stable vegetated banks and a stream developing meanders, recovering from past channelization and downcutting.

Riparian vegetation – Healthy riparian vegetation is one of the most important elements of a healthy stream system, the wider the better. This question is the width of the natural vegetation from the edge of the channel out into the flood plain. Natural vegetation means native and introduced species that function similar to native species.

Bank stability – Some bank erosion is normal in a healthy stream. Outside bends of streams normally have some bare and eroding banks. Excessive bank erosion occurs where riparian zones are degraded or the stream is unstable.

Human -made barriers to fish movement – Barriers to fish movement prevent migration of fish, denying breeding and foraging habitats, and isolate populations of fish and other aquatic animals. Man-made barriers can include diversions and other water withdrawal systems. When answering this question evaluate the area proposed to be enrolled for barriers under your control only.

Non-cropland vegetative cover – provides food, shelter, and nesting habitat for wildlife. Can include any area of native or planted vegetation not managed as crop, hay, or pastureland or managed differently to benefit wildlife. Examples include food plots, unharvested hay, ungrazed pasture, fencerows, field borders, pivot corners, ditch banks, wetland and riparian areas, rangeland or other nearby natural areas.

Prescribed grazing plan – Prescribed grazing is the controlled harvest of vegetation with grazing and/or browsing animals. A prescribed grazing plan specifies the intensity, frequency, duration, and season of grazing to:

- Reduce soil erosion and maintain or improve soil condition.
- Improve or maintain water quality and quantity.
- Manage for and promote ecologically and economically stable plant communities and improve or maintain the health and vigor of selected plant(s).
- Improve or maintain livestock and wildlife health and productivity.

Range Similarity Index – compares present day plant community to potential plant community. Get help from your local NRCS office or other range professional if needed.

Water Appearance – Suspended soil particles (turbidity) results from excessive erosion. A pea-green color in a stream indicates excessive levels of nutrients beyond what the stream can absorb. Rate water appearance after settling has occurred after a storm event. Consider natural (geologic) erosion or upstream activities beyond your control that affect water appearance.